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Visions of the People: a Pictorial History of Plains Indian Life

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tem where every man who had survived the rigors of the hunt and war considered himself the equal of other men, including any chief. The Algonquians disappointed the French, who "envisioned chiefs who would command and thus reject consensual politics and non-coercive power" (145). This problem required a middle ground solution: the Indians moved toward the coercive leadership system of the Europeans (symbolized by medals and cemented by gifts), and whites adjusted when they "lost their . . . attributes of power: the ability to command" (39). Even though they may not have realized it at the time, this adjustment explains how the Europeans could be most successful when they thought they were weakest: compromise instead of force could achieve results.

Brilliant insights developed through exhaustive research in French and English sources make *The Middle Ground* superb ethnohistory. White offers so many stimulating conclusions that other scholars will, of course, challenge him. When he denies that the Algonquians became dependent on whites, for example, he emphasizes material (especially economic) factors, as well as political, social, and environmental dependency. Even those dependency theorists who accept his analysis, however, may continue to make their point by emphasizing other kinds of dependency, such as military, religious, and psychological dependence. *The Middle Ground* presents a refreshingly original interpretive framework for analyzing Indian-white relations in the Great Lakes area. Although readers will be more than satisfied with White's exceptionally thorough footnotes, they would also have appreciated a brief bibliographical essay. This excellent publication will prove rewarding for the general reading public and indispensable for specialists. It should be acquired by public, college, and university libraries.

Visions of the People: A Pictorial History of Plains Indian Life, edited by Evan M. Maurer. Minneapolis: Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 1992; distributed by the University of Washington Press. 298 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography. \$35.00 paper.

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Throughout 1992 and 1993 the fine exhibit, "Visions of the People," toured the Midwest. It featured a wide range of objects, all concerned with biographical and spiritual representations in art. This catalog of that exhibit draws together many significant works of Plains Indian art (both the northern and southern Plains) from more than seventy

collections, including some first-rate early material from institutions in Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, and Germany.

Five scholarly essays range from overviews of Plains art to the examination of particular issues within the Plains tradition. "Visions of the People" (15-45), by the catalog's editor, examines the roots of Plains pictorial traditions in prehistoric rock art, and finds evidence there for "pictorial representation devoted both to dream or vision imagery and to historical or biographical events—the two basic categories of Plains representational art" (27). "The Social Construction of Plains Art" (47-59), by Louise Lincoln, examines Plains pictorial arts as intercultural communication, and looks at how relationships with Anglo-American culture affected Plains arts throughout the nineteenth century. George P. Horse Capture's essay, "The War Bonnet: A Symbol of Honor" (61-67), ranges from autobiographical musings to a discussion of painted hides in the Musée de l'Homme in Paris to a brief analysis of the feathered war bonnet. David Penney's essay, "The Horse as Symbol: Equine Representations in Plains Pictographic Art" (69-79), considers this animal both in paintings and in beaded items of clothing. Father Peter J. Powell's essay, "Sacrifice Transformed into Victory" (81-106) provides a detailed historical and ethnographic analysis of a significant painted muslin done by Lakota artist Standing Bear (1859-1934).

The catalog includes illustrations of more than three hundred objects, many in color. The informative catalog entries, in which are embedded much detailed history (art history and cultural history alike), constitute the most useful part of the book. These small essays, ranging from fifty to five hundred words, were written by Maurer and Lincoln of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, as well as Angela Casselton, Joseph D. Horse Capture, and Candace Green.

This lavishly illustrated volume will interest students of Indian history and western history, as well as lovers of fine art. The survey of pictorial representation offered here extends from the archeological past into the 1990s. Unfortunately, the small selection of late twentieth century art, included to show the survival of the Plains pictorial tradition, does not adequately represent the vigorous artistic traditions that flourish on the Great Plains today, more than one hundred years after most outsiders predicted the death of these cultures. The book's greatest strength lies in its in-depth coverage of the arts of the reservation era (circa 1870-1920). These splendid hide paintings, drawings, carvings, and beaded garments stand as eloquent testimony to the strength and endurance of Lakota, Cheyenne, Kiowa, and other Plains peoples during the era when their cultures were under the greatest attack from outsiders.

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